

Social-ecology:

Exploring the missing link in sustainable development

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Outline

- The social-ecological approach;
 - How inequality matters in un-sustainability;
 - How ecological crises aggravate inequality;
 - What can EU trade unions do about it?
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The social-ecological approach

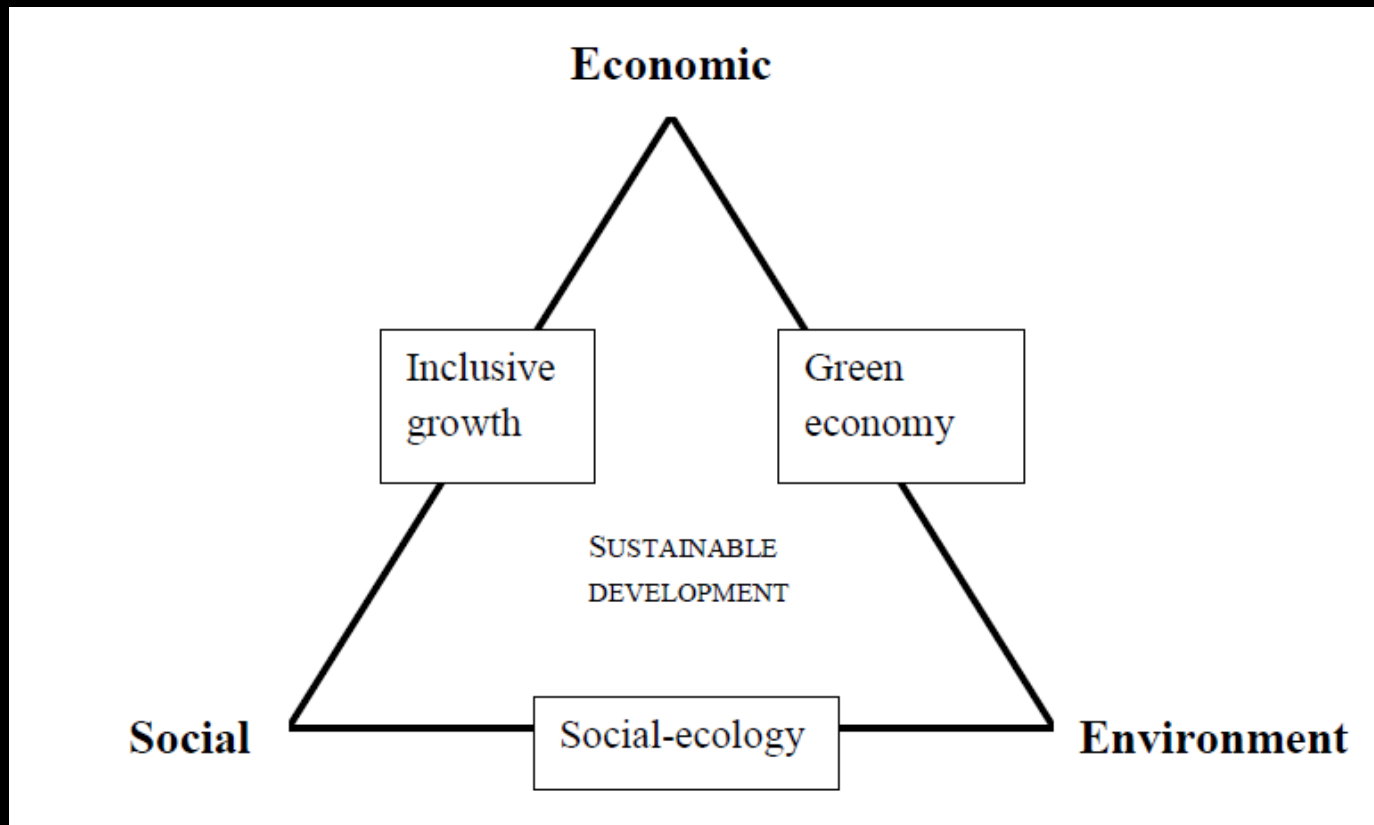
- Social-ecology (Bookchin, Ostrom, Boyce): environmental challenges are truly social problems that arise largely because of income and power inequality and can find their true resolution by putting forward justice principles and building good institutions;
 - Two lines of work in the last 5 years:
 - Designing the social-ecology framework (2008, 2011 books + articles);
 - Building the “social-ecological state” (new book -> 2014, articles, reports);
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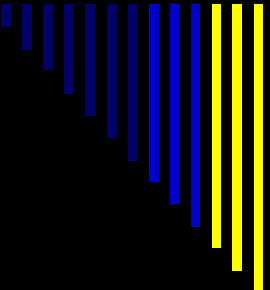


Two general insights from Social-Ecological approach

- First insight, analytical: Social sciences (and humanities) hold the key to the solution of environmental problems that “hard” sciences have revealed over the last three decades;
 - We should thus invest in social-ecological knowledge = learning how to reform our social systems (framing human attitudes and behaviors) in order to preserve our natural life-support system (climate, ecosystems, biodiversity);
 - Second insight, empirical: strong and reciprocal relation linking social justice and ecology; We need institutions to carry the social-ecological transition;
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The missing link in sustainable development





Overcoming the paradox of environmental emergency

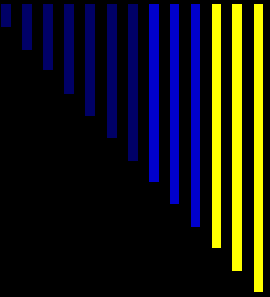
- Paradox of environmental emergency: Environmental degradations gradually become costly and increasingly visible (2013, 2014) but environmental concern seems to have become intolerable in public debate;
 - Two reasons: environmentalist movement has not managed enough to embed ecological challenges in tangible social realities + “great recession” shortens collective horizons and pits social realities against ecological issues;
 - Need to connect the inequality crisis to ecological crises...
 - Two ways: integrative social-ecology and differential social-ecology;
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Integrative social-ecology:

How inequality pollutes the planet

- Micro-ecological: Veblen, Gandhi;
 - Macro-ecological: five channels;
 - 1) Inequality increases the need for environmentally harmful and socially unnecessary economic growth (Piketty-Saez data on US);
 - 2) Inequality increases the ecological irresponsibility of the richest, within each country and among nations (Niger Delta, EJ in US);
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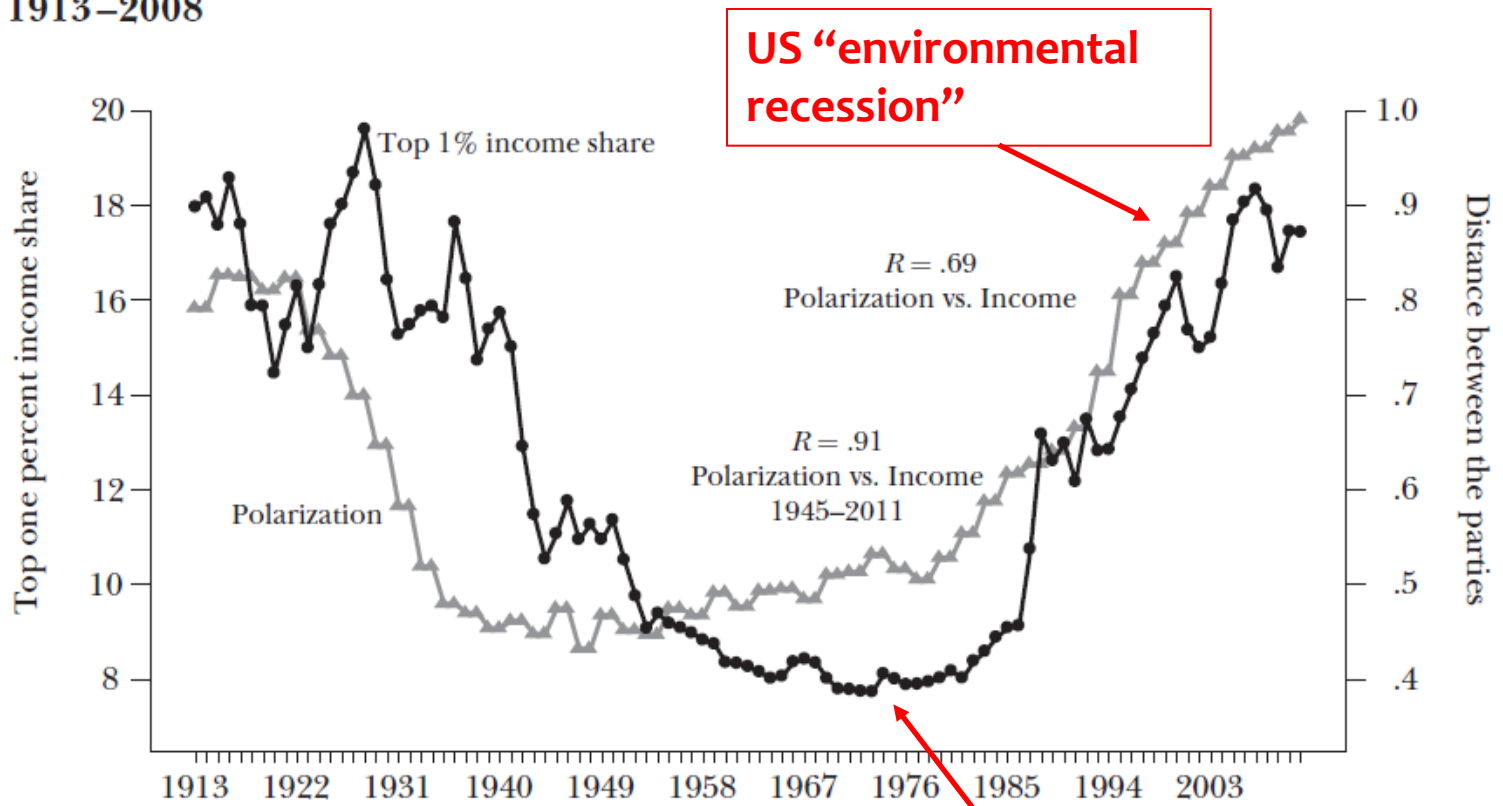
How inequality pollutes the planet

- 3) Inequality, which affects the health of individuals and groups, diminishes the social-ecological resilience of communities and societies and weakens their collective ability to adapt to accelerating environmental change (Wilkinson, Pickett, Farmer);
 - 4) Inequality hinders collective action aimed at preserving natural resources (e.g. political polarization in US and environmental policy);
 - 5) Inequality reduces the political acceptability of environmental preoccupations and the ability to offset the potential socially regressive effects of environmental policies (carbon tax in France);
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Polarization, inequality and environmental retreat in the US

Figure 2

Top 1 Percent Income Share and Polarization in the US House of Representatives, 1913–2008



Source: Bonica, McCarty and Rosenthal, JEL 2013.

Golden Age of environmental policy

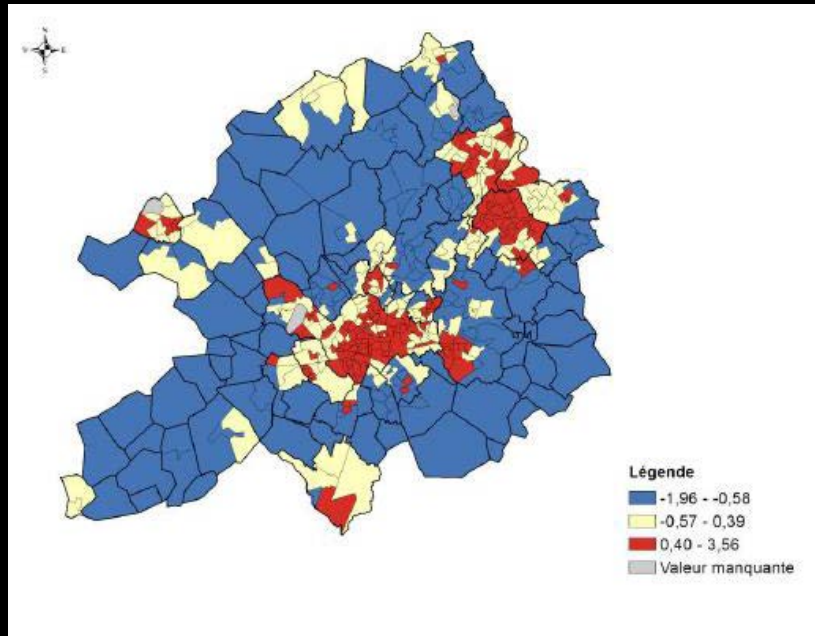


Differential social-ecology: linking environmental and social inequalities

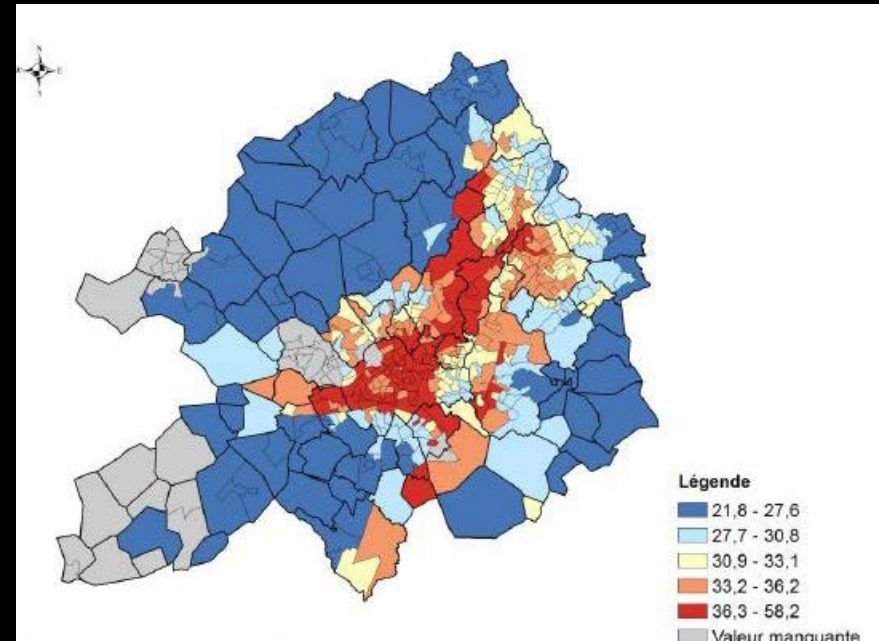
- The other side of the social-ecological nexus;
 - The rise of “environmental inequality” (Laurent, 2011, 2014): exposure, access, etc.
 - Destinal social-ecological injustice: from environmental inequalities to social inequalities via institutions (school, labor market);
 - “Social-ecological”, not “natural” disasters: the revenge of Rousseau (Lisbon, 1755);
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Pollution and poverty

Social disadvantage



NO2 Concentration



Commentaires :

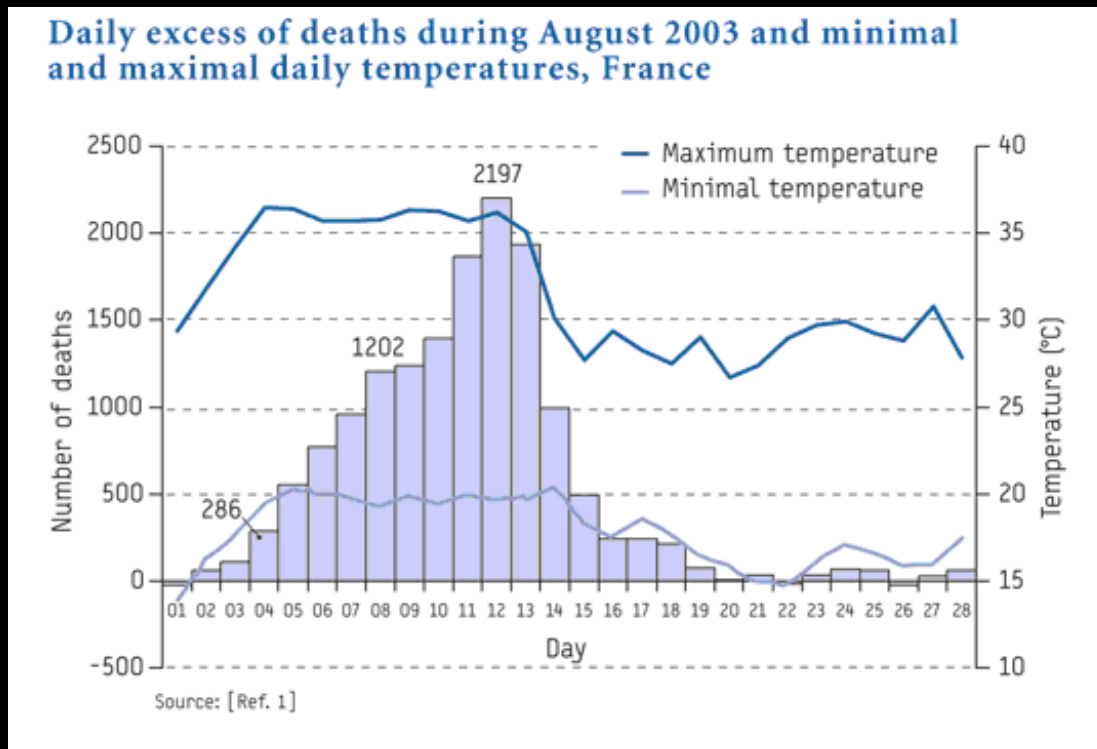
La comparaison de la distribution spatiale de l'indice de défaveur socio-économique (carte de gauche) avec celle des concentrations moyennes du NO₂ dans l'air (carte de droite) met en évidence une certaine similitude : le niveau de défaveur et les concentrations atmosphériques du NO₂ tendent à augmenter parallèlement. Ainsi, les IRIS défavorisés localisés dans les villes de Lille et Roubaix ou Tourcoing affichent des concentrations de NO₂ plus élevées (IRIS colorés en rouge/orangé sur les 2 cartes). A l'inverse, les IRIS situés en périphérie de l'agglomération, et en particulier ceux localisés au Nord-Ouest, Sud-Ouest et Sud-Est, présentent des niveaux de défaveur et de NO₂ plus faibles (IRIS colorés en bleus sur les 2 cartes). On note cependant de nombreuses exceptions, au Nord-Est de la ville de Lille par exemple, qui présente un agrégat d'IRIS aux valeurs de NO₂ plus élevées alors que la défaveur n'y est pas marquée (IRIS colorés dans les tons bleus); ces secteurs sont proches de l'axe routier qui relie Lille et Roubaix et Tourcoing ou de l'autoroute A22.

Nota: les IRIS grisés ne sont pas des secteurs d'habitation, selon l'INSEE (carte de «Défaveur») ou n'ont pas de capteur fixe permettant de caler les valeurs modélisées de NO₂ (carte de « Pollution »).

The heat wave of 2003 in France: 15 000 dead

Latest estimate for the death toll in EU: 70 000 dead from the heatwave of 2003.

Latest research: directly caused by climate change



	14 729 dead
< 35	67
35-65	1254
> 65	13 407 (90%)

The highest risk of dying faced by poor and socially isolated people.

The economic logic of social-ecological investment

Clean Air Act (1970)

Obama climate plan (2014)

The combined U.S.-only estimates of annual climate impacts of CO₂ (\$3 billion) and health impacts of correlated pollutants (\$45 billion) greatly exceed the estimated regulatory compliance costs of \$9 billion/year, for positive net benefits amounting to \$39 billion/year in 2030

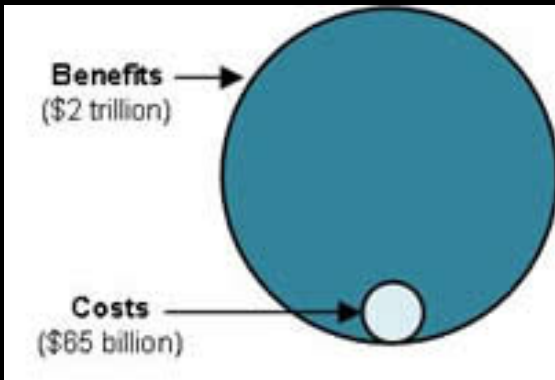


Table 8-3. Summary of Estimated Monetized Benefits, Compliance Costs, and Net Benefits for the Proposed Guidelines –2030 (billions of 2011\$) ^a

	Option 1– state	
	3% Discount Rate	7% Discount Rate
Climate Benefits ^b		
5% discount rate		\$9.5
3% discount rate		\$31
2.5% discount rate		\$44
95th percentile at 3% discount rate		\$94
Air pollution health co-benefits ^c	\$27 to \$62	\$24 to \$56
Total Compliance Costs ^d		\$8.8
Net Benefits ^e	\$49 to \$84	\$46 to \$79



What we are faced with: social-ecological trade-offs

Une matrice social-écologique

	Dégradation environnementale	Amélioration environnementale
Dégradation sociale	<i>Précarité énergétique</i> (pauvreté moné- taire; surconsom- mation d'énergie)	<i>Fiscalité carbone sans compensation sociale</i> (fiscalité sociale- ment régressive; réduction des émissions de gaz à effet de serre)
Amélioration sociale	<i>Construction de logements dans une zone humide</i> (augmentation du bien-être social lié au logement; destruction des écosystèmes et de la biodiversité)	<i>Généralisation de l'eau potable et des sanitaires</i> (amélioration du bien-être et réduc- tion des inégali- tés; réduction des pollutions)

What we need: social-ecological policies

Arbitrages et politiques social-écologiques

	Dégradation environnementale	Amélioration environnementale
Dégradation sociale	<p><i>Précarité énergétique</i></p> <p>Rénovation thermique des bâtiments</p>	<p><i>Taxe carbone sans compensation sociale</i></p> <p>Compensation sociale en fonction du revenu et du lieu de résidence</p>
Amélioration sociale	<p><i>Construction de logements dans une zone humide</i></p>	<p>Révélation de la valeur sociale des écosystème et de la biodiversité</p>



What can European trade unions do about it?

- Historical mission: defend employment and build the welfare state (social protection);
 - New mission: defend the welfare state and build social-ecological protection;
 - More specifically: fight inequality driving ecological crises within and outside the EU;
 - Assess the state of environmental inequality in the EU, redress it by enlarging the perimeter of the welfare state.
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